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CONTENTS

English Section

<i>What Type of Window Do You Look Through?</i> , Psa. Lillian Lupu	3, 4
<i>Newly-Ordained Clergy</i>	4
<i>Families Working Out Their Salvation</i> , Fr. Nicholas Hadzellis	5, 14, 15
<i>The Presentation of the Virgin: The Temple and the Veil</i> , Rev. Hieromonk Calinic (Berger)	6-7, 8
<i>Romanian Inducted in Cleveland's International Hall of Fame</i> , V. Rev. Fr. Remus Grama	8
<i>Scholarships Through the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate</i>	9, 16
<i>"Health Club Memberships,"</i> Diane Farah	10-11, 12
<i>Orthodox Brotherhood USA:</i> <i>Think What You Can Contribute in 2012</i>	12
<i>Financial Report</i>	13
<i>Hierarchal Schedule</i>	14
<i>Clergy Changes</i>	15
<i>Keep Your Hand on the Plow and Your Eyes on the Lord!</i> , Cornelia Merchant	16
<i>School of Byzantine Music Publishes Guide</i> , Archdeacon Panteleimon	17

Romanian Section

<i>Cuvânt de Suflet</i> , + IRINEU, Episcop Vicar	18, 22, 24
<i>Întrebări și Răspunsuri</i> , Pr. Dr. Dumitru Ichim	19, 21
<i>Cum să vă Distrageți, în Mod Practic, Copilul</i> , + IRINEU, Episcop Vicar	19, 21
<i>Sfințirea Bisericii Adormirea Maicii Domnului din Anaheim, California</i> , Participant	20-21
<i>Frăția Ortodoxă SUA: Gândește-te cu ce Contribui tu în 2012</i> , Ron Mureșan	22
<i>Pilda Bogatului Căruia i-a Rodit Țarina (fragment din romanul "Micul Botezător")</i> , Dumitru Ichim	23
<i>Balada Copilului Cerșetor</i> , Florica Bațu	24

COVER: Icon of St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, commemorated on February 27. This icon was written by John Lickwar in 2000 and resides in St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Houston, TX.



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Please see the next issue of Solia for the
Schedule of Events and Hotel information.

WHAT TYPE OF WINDOW DO YOU LOOK THROUGH?

by
Psa. Lillian Lupu

Recently, I received a very cute “e-mail story” – the kind that have pretty pictures with the words, and people pass around to all their e-mail friends. This one, however, had an important lesson:

A young couple moves into a new neighbourhood. The next morning while they are eating breakfast, the young woman sees her neighbour hang the wash outside. She says to her husband: “That laundry is not very clean. Our neighbour doesn’t know how to wash correctly. Perhaps, she needs better laundry soap.” Her husband looked on, but remained silent. Every time her neighbour would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments. About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the line and said to her husband: “Look, she has learned to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her this.” The husband said: “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”

In the story, the window provides a perspective. It raises the way things are seen. Each of us has to be conscious of how we see things. In other words, what window do we look through?

Dirty windows: Everything is negative. We might all know such a person, but would be shocked if we were seen as one. We know the type: they find fault with everyone they come in contact with. Their life is darkly coloured, and they are never happy. Nothing is ever done right, the way it should be done.

No one wants to be around a person who is negative all the time, because it makes everyone around them gloomy. We are all sinful and imperfect with respect to God’s purity, but we must strive to look for goodness in all that we see. “A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit” (Prov 15:13).

Mirrored windows: Everything is a reflection of us. We see ourselves before the other. When someone speaks to us about their troubles, we start to tell them all our own troubles, and how we are coping or not coping. We are more important than the person on the

other side of the conversation. We try to project ourselves in everything we do and to everyone we meet. We talk about ourselves whenever the opportunity arises. We should reflect our true selves, but usually we are only occupied with ourselves, rather than critically examining ourselves. We tend to make ourselves and our experience a standard which is infallible for everyone else, rather than looking objectively at our lack of true self-knowledge. St. Paul has the right attitude: “For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”

(1 Cor 13:12). In other words, in this life, our self-knowledge is always partial, never a standard.

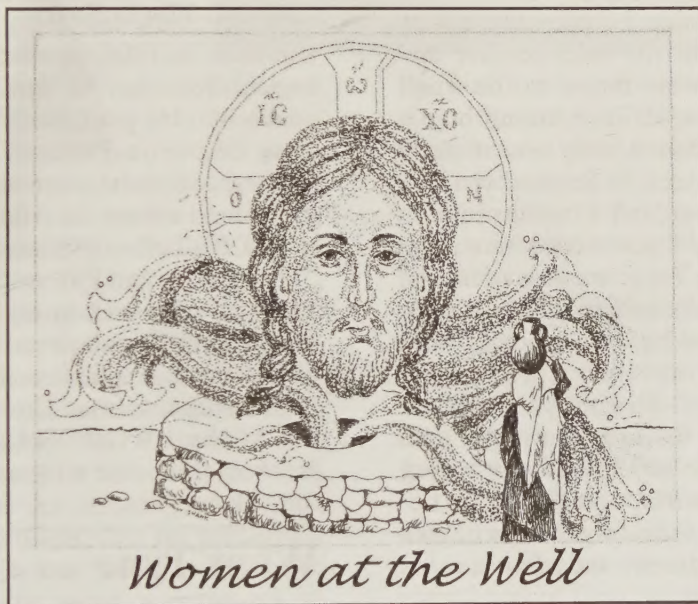
Rose-tinted windows:

Everything is positive. This is a wonderful type of window to look through. Everything we see is favourable and happy. We all know someone who makes an effort to be happy, and their attitude is contagious. This type of person can turn a bad situation into something wonderful. Everyone wants to be a friend with a person that looks through life with a happy attitude. This is a great window through

which to see others, but when we look at ourselves through it, we will never be able to fix what needs to be fixed. It can even lead to pride: “[The prideful man] says to himself, nothing will ever shake me, I will always be happy and never have trouble” (Ps 10:6).

And yet, sometimes we all need a rose-tinted window. Take the “rose-tint” as a filter that removes unwanted and unnecessary glare. I once knew a man who was always happy even when he was suffering in his last days. I asked him once how he was always so positive. He chuckled and told me: “I look in the mirror each morning and decide that I am going to be positive.” During all his cancer treatments to the day he died, he was always trying to make other people feel comfortable and happy. It was a matter of perspective, of looking through the proper window.

Cont. on page 4



Women at the Well

NEWLY-ORDAINED CLERGY



Fr. Thomas Frisby

Robert G. Frisby was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL on Sunday, January 1, 2012, the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord, at St. John the Baptizer Church, Phoenix, AZ. (A convert to Orthodoxy, he took the name Thomas at his Chrismation in 2009.) On Sunday, January 15, 2012, Fr. Deacon

Thomas was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by Archbishop NATHANIEL at Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville, IN, for service to that parish.

Fr. Thomas was born Robert Gene Frisby on February 14, 1958, the firstborn of identical twins (brother Bill) to William C. and Wanda L. (nee Strong) in Kenawee, IL. He, along with his twin brother and later another brother, Jack, were raised in the small farming community of Galva, IL in a loving home. They were not raised in the church, only occasionally attending a local Methodist church. In September 1974, Bill was killed in a car accident, and 3 months later in December, a dear uncle, only 5 years his senior, also perished in an auto accident. These tragic events had a profound effect on Robert, and in August 1976 while attending a camp hosted by the American Baptist Association, he decided to "trust Christ as my Savior and to be his follower." That fall, he attended Western Illinois University for one year, and then transferred to Judson College in Elgin, IL, a school associated with the American Baptists. There he began his pastoral education, graduating with a degree in Psychology (Human Relations) and also met his future wife Laurel.

On August 23, 1980, he married Laurel (nee Thomas) in Elgin, IL, and together they had three daughters (Meagan, Jenna and Sheena). Robert was ordained a Baptist pastor in 1985 by the Southern Baptists, and in 1997 resigned his pastorship to take full time employment to provide for his wife and 3 teenage daughters. In January 2004, they moved to Prescott, AZ and in 2007, they began to discover Orthodoxy after a conversation with a Roman Catholic co-worker. Following some investigation of the Orthodox faith and extensive reading, they began attending St. George Orthodox Church (GOA) in Prescott, AZ where they met Fr. John Peck. Under the spiritual guidance of Fr. John, they were chrismated into the Orthodox faith on the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15) in 2009. They took the names Thomas and Sophia, and Thomas immediately enrolled in the St. Stephen's Course through the Antiochian Archdiocese. Besides

their three daughters, the Frisby's have four grandchildren.

We wish Fr. Thomas and Ps. Laurel God's blessings in his new assignment as Parish Priest of Descent of the Holy Spirit Parish, Merrillville IN.



Deacon Florin Soare

Florin Soare was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by Archbishop NATHANIEL on the Feast of Holy Theophany, January 6, 2012, at St. John the Baptizer Church, Glendale, Arizona. Deacon Florin was ordained for service to Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix, AZ. He was born on June 14, 1984 to Ioan and Elena Soare in Brasov,

Romania. In 1996, he entered Dumitru Staniloae Theological Seminary in Brasov to begin his theological education. He graduated Valedictorian with an Associate Degree in Pastoral Theology in June 2001. He furthered his education at "1 December 1918" Theological Academy in Alba Iulia, graduating in 2005 with a Bachelor of Theology degree, with a minor in "The History and Philosophy of Religions." For nearly 14 years prior to coming to the U.S. and his ordination, Florin Soare served as cantor at various Romanian Orthodox parishes in Romania. On September 26, 2004, he married Loredana-Elena (nee Teodor) at Sts. Michael & Gabriel Church in Sacele, Brasov. She is a social worker with a Bachelor's degree in Theological Art.

What Type ... *Cont. from page 3*

Clean windows: Everything is seen as it should be. It is realistic and, if need be, brutally honest. This is the type of window through which God wants us to view ourselves. We must see what our sins are and correct them. When we look out of our eyes, we should see what we need to see, and thereby do what we need do in order to purify our hearts and soul. "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps 51:10).

Of course, the analogy is imperfect, but the point is not: each one of these windows affects the way we look out onto life; but just as importantly, it affects the way we interact with people. Our eyes need to be full of light (Mt 6:22-23). Except for the dirty one, each window has its proper use. We have to be conscious not only about what we look at in our lives, but how we are looking, through what attitude. The attitude-window can be as important as the object seen. In both, we need God's help and each other.

FAMILIES WORKING OUT THEIR SALVATION

by Fr. Nicholas Hadzellis

The "modern family" consumes television's family programming. The father's role is only for comic relief, as no one really takes him seriously. The mother appears in a constant state of nagging and the children are the real stars of the program. They are hip and grounded in this modern society. Some shows even go so far as to have the children play the role of the responsible, level-headed ones in touch with reality, teaching the lesson to their parents.

However, the Church teaches us a different story about family, marriage and raising children for all times. It teaches us that salvation can be found through family. Salvation is not a singular act in our life, but part of our relationship with God. In Philippians 2:13, St. Paul writes: "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*" Through His grace we work on drawing ourselves closer to Him that we may be blameless, children of God, holding on to the Word of life (Christ Himself).

But how often do we speak in terms of salvation, for ourselves let alone for our spouse and our children? The common Orthodox response is or should be "I was saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved." We understand that through baptism, we receive forgiveness of sin and ultimately a new life in Jesus Christ. That is our one time act of being saved. We also know, as Christ has promised, that He prepares a place for us in paradise. It is the "being saved" part that links the former with the latter, the process of working out our salvation, daily and through our marriage and family.

Marriage and Family as Salvation

To understand "being saved" in the context of marriage and family, we must change the way we see these relationships. Many times, marriage is simply explained as two people living together as two independent individuals with children. They draw a distinction between each other, what is "yours" and what is "mine." St. John Chrysostom says that there is no relationship between human beings as close as that of husband and wife, if they are united, as they ought to be. God made man from the dust of the earth, and woman from man, that we might know that we are made of each other, for each other. There should be no distinction between "yours" and "mine" because it is "ours" together. Together the parents make the fam-



ily, and it is together that they make their decisions about the family. The parents have to be on the same team, of one mind consciously working out their salvation together.

Within the Orthodox Church, marriage is a mystery, a sacrament and blessing from God, rather than a joint venture or legal contract. When the bride and groom are of this mind, working out their salvation through their marital bond, we see marriages become stronger. With stronger marriages, our families are healthier and more sustainable, physically and spiritually. We see families working out their salvation together by seeking first the Kingdom of God.

In the Orthodox rite of Marriage, we come before God truly and faithfully to seek His blessings. We wear the ring on our right hand, because it is by the right hand of God we are brought together. We pray that, like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Moses and the Red Sea, and the Prodigal Son, God is present with us, that God blesses us, and it is through the ring that we bear witness to His blessings. Then we receive our stefana, our crowns for the royalty of our new kingdom, the kingdom of our family home. We also receive the crowns as a type of martyrdom to our self-centered selves. We change our personal pronouns from I, me, mine to we, us, ours. We are joined together as one, so it is no longer I, but We. Ultimately we belong to the other for the benefit of the other and of the family.

St. John Chrysostom writes, "The love of husband and wife is the force that welds society together. That is why men will take up arms and even sacrifice their lives for the sake of this love. Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is

Cont. on page 14

THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN: THE TEMPLE AND THE VEIL

by
Rev. Hieromonk Calinic (Berger)

When we wish to speak with historical precision about the events in the life of the Mother of God, which the Orthodox Church commemorates, we encounter a difficulty not present when we speak of the life of Christ. Specifically, the various New Testament writings, non-Scriptural documents, and the archaeological record provide us with multiple attestations and corroborating witnesses for the words and events in the life of Jesus. His ministry and death were public. Many saw Him after His resurrection. Everyone – disciple and antagonist alike – had vested interests in His words and actions. After Pentecost, the words, actions, life, death, resurrection and most of all the *person* of Christ became the content of the Apostolic preaching of salvation.

Yet this is not the case with the life of the Virgin Mary. Even though the New Testament writings place Mary right beside her Son from the very beginning of His ministry at Cana to its very end at the Cross, and even single her out as a member of the early Church (Acts 1:14); nevertheless, her life was not a public one. She did not speak openly before multitudes, gather disciples and teach. Her life was part of Christian tradition, but it was not the subject of Apostolic preaching. Consequently, the historian does not have the same abundance of resources to ascertain what may or may not have happened in her life. Moreover, whereas the Gospels were written soon after the resurrection of Christ based on eye-witness testimony, the Virgin's life was recorded a century later. So a key question is: are the events in the life of the Mother of God corroborated by historical data?

A case in point is the Feast of the Presentation of the Virgin into the Temple. This commemorates the day when Mary's elderly parents, Joachim and Anna, having prayed for a child and received one, wished to dedicate her to God and therefore brought her to the temple to be devoted entirely to His service. It was there that the high priest greeted the family with prophetic words, and the young Mary entered into the Holy of Holies. In this most sacred space, God's presence was acute and alive. According to God's instructions to Moses, it was separated by a great veil woven of purple, blue and crimson, and the high priest alone went there once a year with the blood of the Atonement sacrifice.

Are there historical or Scriptural grounds on which

to accept these traditions? We know that they were disputed in 14th century Thessalonica and defended by St. Gregory Palamas. Is it really possible that a little girl would live in the temple?

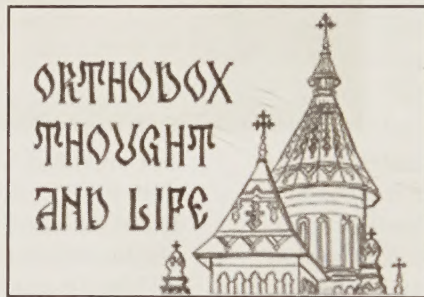
To answer this, we may begin by noting that archaeological evidence indicates that the temple precincts covered an area of *fifty* football fields. It was a large complex of buildings with enormous gates, stairways and courtyards to accommodate its worshippers. The Roman historian Tacitus describes the beauty of

the temple and its "enormous riches" (*Histories* 5.8.1). Herod had it completely rebuilt in the first century BC ("it took 46 years to build this temple," Jn 2:20). Its outer wall was five meters thick which rendered the Roman battering rams ineffective in 70 AD.

We also know that the priests, Levites and other temple servants lived inside the temple precincts. The Scriptures themselves reveal this. For example, Luke tells us that the widowed prophetess Anna "did not depart from the temple either day or night, serving God with fasting and prayer" (Lk 2:37) – that is, she lived in these precincts. We also know that at times, children were brought to the temple and left there to be raised in God's service, such as was the case with the prophet Samuel whose mother, Hanna, prayed for a child after many years of being childless and vowed to dedicate him to God. She fulfilled her vow, and the boy was raised at the temple by the family of Eli the priest, serving even as a child in a linen ephod (I Sam 1-2:18).

Of further significance for our purposes are the multiple witnesses in rabbinical writings to the 82 young virgins who lived at the temple and wove the two great veils to cover the outer sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. According to the *Protevangelium of James*, the Virgin Mary was one of these maidens. This is also reflected in the later iconography of the Annunciation where the Virgin is always shown spinning purple thread, specifically for the temple veil. The fact that the Herodian temple was still under construction at this time heightens the possibility that Mary was indeed engaged in this project.

According to Exodus, God Himself commanded Moses to make two veils for the Tabernacle from blue, purple and scarlet, one at the door of the sanctuary and one covering the entrance to the Holy of Holies, which had images of cherubim woven into it



Ex 26:31,36). Both separated off special, holy space, behind which the living presence of God was manifested. Such a veil also covered the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple (2 Chron 3:14).

At the time of Christ, the characteristics and workmanship of the temple veils are well attested. According to rabbinical witnesses, the veil of the sanctuary was 60 feet long and 30 feet wide, wrought in 72 squares all subsequently stitched together. It was said to be as thick as a man's hand and took 300 priests to hang it. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus describes the outer veil as made of blue, purple and crimson with golden embroidery depicting a panorama of the heavens (*The Jewish War* 5.211-14). Since the inner veil was decorated with cherubim and the outer veil with images of the stars, it is clear that both had the same meaning: they were images of the heavens which divide this world from God's immediate presence. The veil depicting the higher heaven of the angelic world covered the Holy of Holies.

The veils were magnificent. Antiochus took a veil as loot when he sacked Jerusalem in 169 BC (1 Macc. 2:21-22), as did Titus after his sack in 70 AD (*Jewish Wars* 7.162). In the second century, a rabbi saw the veil in Rome, noting the drops of blood on it from the atonement sacrifice.

Now we come to the life of Christ. According to the three synoptic Gospels, the "temple veil" was torn in two "from top to bottom" (Mk 15:38) when Jesus died. The logic of the event clearly indicates this was the veil to the Holy of Holies, which was the one the Virgin helped create. Such an interpretation is clear in the New Testament. For example, Mark's Gospel brings attention to it with an *inclusion* (noticeable in Greek) which parallels the Baptism of Jesus and His Cross: at Jesus' baptism, there is a "rending" of the heavens as the Spirit descends upon Jesus and the Father confesses, "You are My beloved Son" (Mk 1:10-11); at His death there is the "rending" of the veil (which depicted the heavenly world) as Jesus "breathes forth the spirit" and the centurion confesses, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mk 15:37-9). Much more important than this implicit witness, however, is the explicit explanation given in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the inner veil figures prominently in an interpretation of Jesus' death as a fulfillment of the atonement sacrifice (Heb 9, 10). Jesus is both High Priest and Sacrifice, who enters "past the second veil" not to the earthly Holy of Holies, but to the heavenly one. This He does once and for all, clearing "a new and living way" to God's presence for all, "through the veil, that is, his flesh" (Heb 10:20). What is also most interesting in these passages is that the veil of the Holy of Holies is seen as an explicit symbol of Christ's flesh, which veils His true, Divine identity. At His death, both the veil of the temple and the veil of His flesh were removed.

Are there any non-Biblical witnesses to this event?

Several rabbinical sources refer to miraculous occurrences which took place "forty years before the destruction of the temple" (that is, the time of Christ's death). These occurrences were believed to have foretold the temple's destruction. Josephus also mentions some of these, noting that he would not believe them had he not learned them from trustworthy eyewitnesses (*Jewish War* 6.297). These include an earthquake in the temple precincts (cf. Mt 27:54), the doors of the temple opening of their own accord in the middle of the night, and other events. Among these documents is also a witness to the veil being torn. How reliable are these witnesses? As one scholar aptly put it, though we must remain tentative about the historicity of the events reported in these documents and circumspect about correlating them to the accounts in the Gospels; nevertheless, there is enough data in them that warrants their use in the historical assessment of the Gospel narratives. We could add: the same is true in the value they give us in assessing the events in the life of the Mother of God.

Now we return to the Presentation of the Virgin. The parallel in the Epistle to the Hebrews between the veil of the temple and the veil of Christ's flesh was not lost on patristic homilists and hymnographers. Neither was the fact that *the same woman*, the Virgin Mary, was responsible for making *both* veils. One she made with her hands, the other with her womb. Subsequently, the temple, the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant and other items of the temple were seen as images of the Mother of God, whose life and work both concealed and revealed God. When the Scriptural description of the temple items are read in this manner, the parallels can be quite impressive – one need only listen to our festal hymns.

This takes us to our concluding points. Christianity is about Christ, but Christ did not exist in a vacuum, disconnected from other human beings. He had a Mother. If we are adopted sons (Gal 4:5), brothers of Jesus (Mt 12:48-50) and members of His body (Rom 12:5) – a body taken from the Virgin – then the Mother of Christ is also the Mother of all Christians. We feel a proximity to the Theotokos and an interest in everything she did: her rule of life, discipline, humility, thoughts, activities and the background, events and people that shaped her life. As St. Ambrose of Milan said, "Mary is a rule of life for all." Thus it is that we celebrate the events of her life as we do the events of the life of Jesus Christ.

But can we scientifically prove that her Presentation and her living her days in the temple actually occurred? Perhaps not. However, based on historical, circumstantial evidence, we can say that her living there as a young girl and helping weave the temple veil is *not improbable*. Furthermore, given the Scripture's depiction of her person and the respect given her in the Jerusalem church, we can say that it

Cont. on page 8

ROMANIAN INDUCTED IN CLEVELAND'S INTERNATIONAL HALL OF FAME



Miss Lucretia Stoica (center) surrounded by some of her friends. Among them are: Fr. and Psa. Remus Grama (left) and Alin Rosca, Hon. Consul of Romania (left).

Cleveland, Ohio – Half of Cleveland's 220 year history is shaped, among all other ethnic groups, by Romanians. Proofs of their living history and vibrant culture can be found everywhere, in the churches and societies, the Romanian Museum or the Rockefeller Nationalities Park where Romanians have their own Cultural Garden. Just recently, the local newspaper, *The Plain Dealer*, featured a building in Gordon's square, where the first Romanian newspaper was once printed. Needless to say, the past glory and today's large Romanian immigrant population of this generation set Cleveland aside as a strong Romanian presence in America. Romanians and those who wish to be Romanian, as we jokingly say, come together in an annual summer Romanian Festival, a true homecoming event for St. Mary Cathedral.

Cleveland Romanians stand out as civic leaders who have contributed to the shaping of America. Among the best known prominent personalities is Miss Lucretia (Titzi) Stoica, who led the Nationalities Services for 42 years. She is a member of St. Mary Romanian Cathedral. On May 14, 2011, in a festive ceremony staged by *Clevelandpeople.com* at the downtown Marriott, she was inducted into Cleveland's International Hall of Fame - a great recognition for her and our community! Born in Youngstown, Ohio, Lucretia (Titzi) Stoica studied in Cluj and became active in the Cleveland international community prior to WW II. Assisting immigrants of all ethnic backgrounds, she developed a huge web of admirers. She worked side-by-side with titans of Cleveland's politics but remained

a humble, yet eloquent personality. She is deeply anchored in her church and community. An endowment fund was created in her name. Her work will always be associated with Cleveland's mayors and our own prominent figures, such as Frs. John Trutza and Vasile Hategan, John Sibisan, Ted Andrica, George Dobrea, Elena Vasiliu, Nick Bucur, Peter Lucaci and many others. We salute and congratulate Miss Stoica who brings honor to her church and the American-Romanian community.

V. Rev. Fr. Remus Grama

Presentation of the Virgin ...

Cont. from page 7
is entirely fitting.

The Feast of the Presentation calls to our attention that unique and total dedication to God that the Virgin Mary exemplified and which allowed her to become the Mother of God. Even today, God uses people who are totally dedicated to Him. Without such total dedication, there would have been no Church, and without it there will be no Church. Yet such a dedication of Christians to Christ must be constantly renewed. For this reason, as a great reminder of the one who exemplified dedication to Christ, the Orthodox Church celebrates each year the Presentation of the Virgin into the Temple.

SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE (ROEA)

*All information and some application forms may be accessed via the internet at:
<http://roea.org/scholarships.html>*

A.R.F.O.R.A. SCHOLARSHIPS

ARFORA UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

A \$1,000 scholarship may be awarded annually to a woman who has completed the first year of a baccalaureate program at an accredited college or university. She must be registered in the next year of her program of undergraduate study. She must be a communicant member of the ROEA (see Application Requirements below).

ARFORA—HELEN MUNTEAN EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

A \$1,000 scholarship may be awarded annually to a woman who has completed the first year of a baccalaureate program at an accredited college or university. She must be enrolled in the School of Education for the purpose of becoming a teacher, and must be registered for the next year of her program of studies. She must be a communicant member of the ROEA (See Application Requirements below).

ARFORA—MARTHA GAVRILA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

One scholarship of \$1,000 may be awarded annually to a woman who has completed a baccalaureate degree and has been accepted for graduate work at an accredited college or university. The applicant must be registered in a graduate program and must specify her course of study. She must be a voting, communicant member of the ROEA (See Application Requirements below).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ARFORA SCHOLARSHIPS

Besides the conditions listed above, the applicant must submit the following: (1) Three letters of recommendation must be mailed directly to the attention of the ARFORA SCHOLARSHIPS COMMITTEE at the address listed below. One letter from the parish priest (if related, one from another priest), one letter from a college or university faculty member attesting to her scholarship and character, and one from an individual not related to the applicant, attesting to her character. (2) A glossy photograph must be included with the above specified information. (3) A formal letter projecting the applicant's plans, including personal goals, projected use of degree, church and community involvement, honors and awards.

SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM AND LETTERS by MAY 15, 2012 to: ARFORA

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE, 222 ORCHARD PARK DR., NEW CASTLE, PA 16105-3018.

WM. R. STANITZ / AROY SCHOLARSHIP

In August of 1971, the Constantin J. Stanitz family of Chicago established a Scholarship Fund in memory of their son, William Robert Stanitz, who met a tragic death in California. Two undergraduate scholarships of \$1,000 each may be awarded annually. The applicant must be an active AROY member, a graduate of high school or a college student, or one who intends to enroll in a school or college of university level. The following constitutes a formal application: (a) a biographical history including family (b) educational background and grades (c) AROY and Church activities (d) extra-curricular interests or achievements (e) reasons why applying for the scholarship (f) photograph (g) letter of recommendation from parish priest or AROY advisors regarding parish/AROY activities. All applicants who meet the qualifications and submit all of the necessary information will be eligible for the scholarship, which is awarded by random drawing. **Send completed application by JULY 1, 2012 to: WILLIAM R. STANITZ - AROY SCHOLARSHIP FUND, ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE, PO BOX 309, GRASS LAKE, MI 49240-0309.**

DUMITRU GOLEA GOLDY-GEMU SCHOLARSHIP

Offers two undergraduate scholarships of \$1,500 each, which may be awarded annually to undergraduate students of Romanian origin according to the established requirements and rules. The applicant must have completed high school or already be enrolled in college. **Application Deadline is MAY 31, 2012. Applicants may obtain requirements and forms from <http://roea.org/goldygemu.html> or by writing to: GOLDY SCHOLARSHIP, ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE, PO BOX 309, GRASS LAKE MI 49240-0309.**

THE PAMFIL AND MARIA BUJEA FAMILY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SEMINARIAN SCHOLARSHIP

The Pamfil and Maria Bujea Seminarian Scholarship is a scholarship given once only to a male or female Canadian or American Orthodox Christian citizen studying with the intention of serving, for a given

Cont. on page 17

“HEALTH CLUB MEMBERSHIPS”

by Diane Farah

A membership at a health club always sounds good - better health, getting in shape, working out with your friends, keeping your health insurance agents and doctors happy. And, in the beginning, it is good. Our health does improve. We begin to make it up a flight of stairs without huffing and puffing. We are no longer endorphin-challenged. Our motivation and energy is high. We begin to feel good, and maybe even look good.

Then reality sets in. It isn't so easy. Every time we get better at weights, the treadmill, or any number of machines, some trainer raises the bar, and we have to work all over again to meet the new numbers. It takes discipline to keep going when the newness wears off. We find excuses not to go, then we become part of the majority dropping in and eventually dropping out. We go on vacation but don't return to the gym when we get back. We have an illness, but once it is over we can't seem to get back into the routine. We convince ourselves - maybe next year, maybe when a friend joins, maybe when it is cheaper, maybe when a gym opens closer to home. We made some progress but we have difficulty sustaining it.

Sound familiar?

Our Church has a form of health club, a 'gym', too...our Lenten periods. We begin invigorated. We aren't going to eat meat. We're going to go to Church more, pray more, fast from something tangible the whole 40 days. We sincerely want to get into spiritual shape, and joining in with the rest of the members of our church community seems a good idea, a natural thing to do together. Once more, we are energized, motivated, a part of it all.

Again reality sets in. Our spiritual workout excuses aren't much different than the ones we used for health club workouts. We get ill, we drop the routine. We go on vacation or attend important functions, and we break the fast.

It takes discipline to keep on doing spiritual exercising. Sometimes, we find we are the only ones 'working out' by fasting. Sometimes we see everyone else is sticking to it, and we are the ones lagging behind or just quitting. Our motivation clouds up. We let it mess with our heads. "Why are we doing this?", we ask ourselves. "Is there a point to not eating meat?" We begin to justify our position. Or, we simply ignore the rest of the fasting season. We did enough, we tell ourselves. Forget fasting during all 4 major fast periods during the year. We can't even make it through the Great Fast....

So, how do we move forward?

The Church, our "Mother" in our tradition, knows us, and because She knows us, She gives us a rhyth-

mic schedule during the church year during which we can keep our spiritual exercises going.

She gives us a structure for developing the discipline of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. She invites all Her children to work out at the same time, to encourage each other, like a buddy system. She makes the work incremental. We can achieve small percentages of success, over time, as we build our spiritual muscle. She is like the 'all-seeing' trainer who gauges when we need to increase our efforts, when we need to start over, when we need to get back on track in all areas of our spiritual health.

So, what about prayer? Does it matter for what, for whom, and how we pray?

The easiest and probably most common prayer we pray is a petition, a clause in our 'contract', a bargain, because we see God as the ultimate insurance fellow. "If I pray, God, will you grant me...?" "Could you send me a sign, God? I need to know You are there." "Will You please control the weather/health/safety/fortune for me and my loved ones, God?"

Fairly soon our confessor, or spiritual trainer, raises our prayer bar, and we find we have to work harder (change is always a lot of work with some pain attached). "I blew it God, can you forgive me?" "Help me develop some new habits, God, because these old ones are killing me." "I need to reconcile, I guess, but it's too hard without help, God."

Finally, the trainer raises the bar again, and ironically the most difficult form of prayer is what seems should be the easiest: "Thank you for my blessings, for your mercy, for your graciousness, God." "Thank you for the gifts of the Holy Spirit." "Thank you for...". Try sustaining thankfulness, and see for yourself how much spiritual maturity this calls for. You have to work really hard at it.

Sure it matters for what, for whom, and how we pray. Prayer is more for our own benefit than one might think, even when we are praying for others. We are the direct beneficiaries of our prayers. Through prayer, we determine the direction of our soul. We focus, set and stay the course.

Prayer keeps us awake, spiritually alive to the moment, when our tendency is to be like the apostles at the Transfiguration...sleepy, not really present, not paying attention. It is no mistake that our liturgical services are peppered with the words, "let us attend".

Prayer helps us 'put on the mind of Christ'.

Prayer is loving to have God in our life so much, that we can talk to Him as easily as we breathe.

Prayer is our temporal conversation with infinity, a link between heaven and earth, between history and salvation. It is a true 'lifeline' connecting the world

we know and the world we will come to know. If you know nothing about the Bible except that it is a continuing conversation between us and God, you will now something about prayer.

Sure, it matters.

So, how come we have to fast? Isn't prayer hard enough?

If we are in the gym at the local health club, are weights enough? Are aerobic exercises enough? Are steps enough? Each has value, and each task requires different discipline and energy. Each strengthens us in different way.

Fasting is another form of gaining control over limp, underused, or undiscovered areas of ourselves. What we choose to fast from depends on how serious we are about gaining control over our actions and thoughts. It also depends on how aware we are of where we are strong and where we are weak.

Do you think it matters to God whether we eat meat, or olive oil, or fish with or without shells, or if we eat cake 3 times a day? Don't think so. What God says matters is that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He calls us to pay attention to ourselves so we can be part of that Kingdom with Him.

Many writers and thinkers in the church over time have suggested that fasting from hateful thoughts, from mean-spirited or hard-hearted actions, from lies, is a great way to change course. Begin by examining how you treat your family members, or the kids at school, or the people you work with.

Fasting from simple things like types of food is a hard first step. If you can master something so elementary, you build up to mastery over the more meaningful things like thoughts, attitude, and actions...which are much harder to recognize, acknowledge, and adjust.

Whatever you fast from, just be sure it is beneficial to you, that it helps you in some way to be a better follower of Christ. Otherwise, you are wasting your time.

God calls you to love yourself, and you need to love yourself enough to do what it takes to get healthy. It takes great humility to love yourself enough to change into the person God created you to be in His image.

All this, and you want us to alms-give too? We gave at the office...how nice.

If we begin to thank God for blessings, and we begin to fast from those things which seek to control us more than we control them, almsgiving is a natural follow-up. Just as exercising in the gym leads to a more active, well-rounded lifestyle, so do prayer and fasting - our spiritual exercises - lead us to take a more active, well-rounded role in our communities.

Almsgiving isn't about throwing some extra pennies, or dollars, or millions of dollars into a charity pot somewhere. It isn't about patting our satisfied selves on the back, because we dumped our old clothes/furniture/cell phones/eyeglasses off on poorer rela-

tives or pick-up-the-tax-receipt charities. It is about developing empathy for others.

Almsgiving is more about being responsible for and to our neighbors because we love. WE LOVE.

Love of others is the inevitable outcome of moving closer to God. If you find yourself unable to love, then wake up. Something is wrong. You need to change something in your life or you will perish. That part of you which seeks God is dying. If you can't see Him in those around you, whom He created, you're in trouble.

The fast has already started so...

The best part of the Fast is if you missed this one, another one is coming to the calendar year near you within a few months, and you don't have to miss it.

The best part of the Fast is that whatever you gain, it is more than you had before.

The best part of the Fast is that, mercifully, God doesn't need it in order to be with us. He welcomes us, even at the last moment, that 11th hour we hear about on Pascha, when we realize we need to be with Him.

Look at the icon of the Resurrection. It's God's hand that is initiating, is extending to grasp hold of us in Hades. We aren't reaching up to Him as much as He is reaching down for us. He comes to find us when we are lost. We hear His voice calling us. He claims us for His own.

It is in our nature to want to talk, to connect, to be with the ones we love; to master our impulses and appetites, to find God in everyone and in everything, and in every place, at all times. That is how we were created to be, in love, out of nothing, by God, and in His image and likeness. That is our inheritance, and we need to claim it in its fullness.

So, when the censer swings in your direction the next time you are in church, know that it is a proclamation, an honor bestowed by the Church on you as the heir of God's Kingdom. That censer celebrates God-in-you.

You can freely accept your nature, or you can reject it. It is your choice. The culmination of all the choices you will make in your life - choosing to pray or not to pray, to fast or not to fast, to give alms or not to give alms, to love or not to love - determine who you are, who you want to be.

If you live your life without God, you won't want to be with Him. It won't be that you aren't prepared and He rejects you - it will be that you reject Him. God's choice is that we are all with Him in all our journeys, in this life, and in the life to come. Your choice is your choice. Be careful, though. Don't be lulled into thinking you will sit up at life's end and want something you have never wanted. That's the ultimate lie. That's the 'caveat beware' in the spiritual health club contract. If you change nothing, nothing will change.

On the other hand, returning to God is no harder than striking a match to bring light into the dark. God

Cont. on page 12

ORTHODOX BROTHERHOOD USA: THINK WHAT YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE IN 2012

Through the Orthodox Brotherhood, our Episcopate continues its Romanian-American contribution to North American Orthodoxy in greater measure than our mere size in members would suggest.

As of January 26th, everyone can now visit the Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) website at <http://ocl.org/node/218> and see how our Vatra's archives helped save our Orthodox history from nearly being lost. OCL's 24th Annual Meeting last October in Pittsburgh, PA, honored the 1963 and 1977 "CEOYLA" (Council of Eastern Orthodox Youth Leaders of the Americas) youth council's Festivals of Orthodoxy, where over 10,000 faithful filled Pittsburgh's old Mellon Arena, covered on nationwide TV: Twelve bishops from every Orthodox group, with over 175 priests, and the Thousand-voice Choir, with AROY plus the six other CEOYLA youth groups providing 150-voices each. It is an Orthodoxy-wide manifestation that has never been surpassed.

CEOYLA's nationwide campaigns influenced 32 states to recognize Orthodoxy as a Major Faith and to place Orthodox orphans & foster-children with *Orthodox* families. In the 1950's, CEOYLA helped OCF's (Orthodox Christian Fellowships) to organize on college campuses across North America, and influenced the SCOBA (Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas) to form in 1960.

The 24th OCL Meeting began (also viewable at the link above) with the recorded greeting of Bishop +Basil of Wichita, Secretary of our Assembly of Orthodox Bishops (North & Central America), in which His Grace reminisces about his attending the glorious 1963 Festival as a youth.

Brotherhood V.P. Ron Muresan gave the keynote speech and multi-media talk using photos & reports which he'd gathered and produced, with the blessing and help of our Archbishop +Nathaniel. His Eminence also addressed the dozens of leaders, who included local rector Fr. Hieromonk Patrick Carpenter, Mother Christophora of Transfiguration Monastery, and Brotherhood Treasurer Marie Avramaut. The brittle '63 audiotape and the '77 "U-Matic" video were saved by two members of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit. The Meeting also heard from '77 Festival Chairman Michael Herzog (OCA) & the Antiochian leader, Ms. Kweilin Nassar, who produced the 1977 program for KDKA-TV. This was truly an Orthodoxy-wide effort.

2012 is full of promise for Brotherhood's realizing further progress. Keep an eye open for our Winter-Spring Mailing, that will ask: "What Do You Feel You Can Offer Your Church in 2012?"

Orthodox Brotherhood will soon reach out to you through its new website: send any content you would like us to feature, to ronmuresan@att.net. We continue our traditional subsidies for Vatra summer youth Camps, the pocket calendars, and in 2011, we stepped up to our Archbishop's call to subsidize our ROEA role in the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops.

Another project is nearing completion: bi-lingual publication of the beautiful collection *The Orchard with the Saints & Angels*, by the late Preoteasa Florica Batu Ichim. We trust that the articles, plus poetry and specially-written icons, will teach & inspire you; we will be seeking financial donations so it can be distributed not only in bound form but digital as well. We appeal to our Hierarchs, Deans, Clergy, Religious Educators & especially parents/godparents, to please plan on using this publication as a treasury for your family's Life in the Faith.

We are also working toward a fitting commemoration in 2014, the Centennial of the birth of our late Archbishop +Valerian, to preserve & give thanks for the life and legacy of that great Romanian-American, who gave us all he had to give, bringing out the best in us individually and as a group.

Lastly, please keep your eyes peeled and hearts open, for a major 2012 announcement that is in planning and promises great things for your Life in Orthodoxy. Parents, Godparents, Grandparents, Children, get ready to challenge yourselves to be better Orthodox Christians, starting in your own home, your own family, your own heart.

By the Lord's Help,

Brotherhood Board Member

Health Club ... *Cont. from page 11*

always books us a return ticket home if we choose to use it.

So, keep the faith, and keep the fast, and keep on trying. The real currencies in life are time and love. Thank God we have some of both to sustain us while we wander about, trying to find our way. Sooner or later, as Christians, we hope we are amazed and grateful that God is with us; that Christ is risen; that we have a Way to follow.

Dianne Farah is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary (M.Div.) and is a member of the Basilica of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church, Livonia, Michigan, where she is a Co-Administrator of the Church School.

FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS

Rev Fr Catalin & Psia Nicole Mitescu, Claremont, CA	\$550.00
Ornel & Sharon Ivascu, Franklin, MI	\$300.00
rs Jeffrey & Felicia Ivascu O'Connor, Birmingham, MI	\$300.00
/M John Ivascu, Houston, TX	\$300.00
r Natalia Ivascu, New York, NY	\$300.00
r/M Ion Petrea, West Haven, CT	\$300.00
/M William Balamaci, Milford, CT	\$200.00
Rev Fr Remus & Psia Elena Grama, Cleveland, OH	\$200.00
Ilvia Teodorescu, Salinas, CA (IMO Prof Paul Teodorescu)	\$200.00
Ihail & Lenuta Teodorescu, King of Prussia, PA	\$200.00
Marian Varzoaba & Family, Ypsilanti, MI	\$200.00
George & Evie Dobrin, Blacklick, OH	\$100.00
Richard C Grabowski, Jackson, MI	\$100.00
George & Mary Ross, Schererville, IN	\$100.00
oaina Speriosu, Jamaica Estates, NY (IMO Dr Simion Speriosu)	\$100.00
Rev Fr Dimitrie Vincent, Redford, MI	\$100.00
ylvia Cantor, Parma, OH	\$75.00
thomas Moga, Northville, MI	\$60.00
arie George, Regina, SK	\$50.00
Kathleen Podoba-Lind, Willoughby, OH	\$50.00
ivian Radu, Philadelphia, PA	\$50.00
/M Joseph Totan, Canton, MI	\$50.00
Helen Ungham, Beaver Falls, PA	\$50.00
ann & John Dragos, Lexington, KY	\$35.00
andre & Donna Gib, Chandler, AZ	\$25.00
/M Ovidiu Grama, Rocky River, OH	\$25.00
Helen Popa, Monaca, PA	\$25.00
Ray & Mary Sankey, New Castle, PA	\$25.00
Sylvia Yova, Fairlawn, OH	\$25.00

GENERAL DONATIONS

Psa Eleonora Lazar Memorial Fund	\$500.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN (Hierarch Travel Expenses)	\$250.00
Rev Fr Nicolae Lapuste, North Vancouver, BC (ACE Fund Donation)	\$100.00
W Rev Fr Virgil Suci, Peoria, AZ (2011 Confer-Treat)	\$100.00
John & Constanta Korolchuk, Inver Hts, MN (Post-Congress Donation)	\$50.00
Florence Westerfield, Warren, MI	\$30.00
Maria Nunciag, Center Line, MI	\$10.00

MEMORIAM

Holy Trinity, Youngstown, OH (IMO Psa Eleonora Lazar)	\$100.00
National ARFORA (IMO Anne Groza)	\$100.00

EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT

St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, OH	\$24,720.00
St Mary, Chicago, IL	\$19,980.00
Sts Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hts, MI	\$19,680.00
St Dimitrie, Easton, CT	\$16,320.00

Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL	\$14,400.00
St George Cathedral, Southfield, MI	\$14,040.00
St Dumitru, New York, NY	\$12,060.00
St George Cathedral, Regina, SK	\$10,449.00
St Mary, Falls Church, VA	\$10,320.00
Three Hierarchs, Seattle, WA	\$10,200.00
St Mary, Anaheim, CA	\$9,960.00
Holy Trinity, Los Angeles, CA	\$9,900.00
Holy Cross, Hollywood, FL	\$7,740.00
Decent of the Holy Spirit, Elkins Park, PA	\$6,240.00
St George, Canton, OH	\$5,580.00
Sts Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN	\$5,820.00
St Mary, Elmhurst, NY	\$5,460.00
Holy Cross, Alexandria, VA	\$5,340.00
Holy Trinity, New Westminster, BC	\$5,100.00
St John the Baptist, Kitchener, ON	\$4,860.00
Holy Resurrection, Hayward, CA	\$4,680.00
St Mary, Portland, OR	\$4,020.00
Sts Constantine & Helen, Lilburn, GA	\$4,000.00
St Andrew Mission, Potomac, MD	\$3,990.00
St John, Glendale, AZ	\$3,720.00
St Nicholas, Regina, SK	\$3,600.00
St Anne, Jacksonville, FL	\$3,360.00
Descent of the Holy Spirit, Oregon City, OR	\$3,060.00
Holy Cross, London, ON	\$3,060.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Middle Village, NY	\$3,000.00
St Nicholas, Montreal, QC	\$3,000.00
St Joseph of Maramures, Hazelton, PA	\$3,300.00
Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH	\$2,880.00
St Raphael, Detroit, MI	\$2,880.00
St Elias, Ellwood City, PA	\$2,820.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Apopka, FL	\$2,700.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Palm Springs, CA	\$2,700.00
St Thomas, St Louis, MO	\$2,580.00
St Anne, Pomona, CA	\$2,100.00
St Andrew Mission, Laval, QC	\$2,078.25
St Nicholas Mission, Ottawa, ON	\$1,530.00
St Dimitrie, Easton, CT (2011)	\$1,505.00
Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix, AZ	\$1,290.00
Sts Peter & Paul Mission, Quebec City, QC (2011)	\$1,230.00
St Stephen Mission, Clearwater, FL	\$1,050.00
St Basil Mission, Durham, NC	\$750.00
St Andrew Mission, Brooksville, FL	\$420.00

DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS

St Anne, Pomona, CA	\$200.00
Rev Deacon Dan Chirtu, Aurora, ON	\$100.00
St John Ladies Auxiliary, Woonsocket, RI	\$100.00
Presentation of Our Lord, Fairlawn, OH	\$90.00
Audrey & George Fatsy, Trumbull, CT	\$50.00

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Psa Eleonora Lazar Memorial Fund	\$500.00
Stephen & Katherine Miroy, Stafford, VA (Camp Vatra)	\$400.00

ARFORA HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECT

St Mary Ladies Auxiliary, Cleveland, OH	\$500.00
Deborah Moga, Northville, MI	\$150.00



HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

November 22, 2011 – February 5, 2012

November 26-27. Potomac, MD. St. Andrew Mission. Saturday: Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet for the patronal feast of St. Andrew the First-Called.

November 29-30. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Tuesday: Vigil for feast of St. Andrew. **Wednesday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of St. Andrew.

December 4. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

December 5-6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Monday: Vigil for feast of St. Nicholas. **Tuesday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of St. Nicholas.

December 11. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. **Afternoon:** Hosted visit of St. Parascheva Charity group of Sts. Constantine & Helen Cathedral (Chicago – Romanian Archdiocese) to the Vatra.

December 18. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

December 24. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Morning: Vespereal Liturgy of St. John. **Evening:** Vigil for Nativity of the Lord.

December 25. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Nativity of the Lord.

December 26. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Synaxis of Birthgiver of God.

December 27. Clinton, MI. Ascension of the Lord Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Irineu for feast of St. Stephen the Archdeacon and Protomartyr.

January 1. Glendale, AZ. St. John. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Thomas “Robert” Frisby into Holy Diaconate for Descent of Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville IN.

January 6. Glendale, AZ. St. John. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Theophany of the Lord. Ordination of Florin Soare into the Holy Diaconate for Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix AZ. Great Blessing of water.

January 8. Phoenix, AZ. Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 14-15. Merrillville, IN. Descent of Holy Spirit. Saturday: Great Vespers. **Sunday:** Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination into the Holy Priesthood of Deacon Thomas “Robert” Frisby for Descent of Holy Spirit Parish. Great Blessing of water. Banquet.

January 22. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

January 29. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy concelebrated with Bishop Irineu. Memorial Service for Archbishop Valerian (25th Anniversary). Banquet.

February 2. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for feast of Presentation of the Lord.

February 5. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

Families ... *Cont. from page 5*

kept in order, and neighbors, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for family and state, are thus produced.” This is the mystery of marriage, and the fruit of marriage is the family.

Parents – the Primary Example of Marriage

We are given examples as to how to live a Christian life by the Gospel and the lives of the saints. We are called to follow Christ and we commit ourselves to Him daily. This will lay the foundation for our children. Our own example will be the framework in which our children will work out their salvation. As parents, we are the primary example of marriage, relationships and Christian living. When we embrace the Orthodox teaching of marriage, our children will learn the love of their parents, but also the love a husband has for his wife, the love a wife has for her husband, and the love they share for God. We will lay the foundation that they will build upon.

There are many Orthodox practices (asceticism) that we can teach our children, such as prosphora making, confession and being good stewards of the church. One of the most important disciplines we can instill is to pray with our children as a family. They can be active participants by reading the prayers or singing hymns with us. We should also allow our children to hear our own personal prayers, so they may learn that prayer is something we do as Orthodox Christians, children and adults alike.

When we fast, we need to teach our children to fast in an age appropriate way. As they get older, their fasting rule can get stricter.

We can teach them the seasons of fasting and feasting, but we should also share with them our struggles and the benefits of keeping the fast.

We can also invite our children to help us with our works of charity. If age permits, they should help physically by serving with us in a soup kitchen or they can help financially by contributing to a charity we support (e.g. IOCC, OCF, OCMC, etc.).

Above all, it is important that we teach them about charity by being charitable.

Conclusion

Our children will learn by seeing, hearing and doing. If we start while they are young, they will grow

Cont. on page 15

SOLIA JAN/FEB 2012

CLERGY CHANGES

ORDINATIONS

ALEXE, Rev. Deacon Gabriel, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by His Grace Bishop IRINEU on October 22, 2011 at Sts. Peter & Paul Serbian Orthodox Church, Oakville ON which is used for services by Holy Confessors of Transylvania Mission.

CHIRTU, Dan S., was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL on June 26, 2011 at St. John the Baptist Church, Fitchener ON for service there.

DONKA, Mihaița V., was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL on March 27, 2011 at Saints Michael & Gabriel Church, Sacramento CA for service there.

FRISBY, Robert G. "Thomas", was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL on January 1, 2012 at St. John the Baptizer Church, Glendale AZ.

FRISBY, Rev. Deacon Thomas "Robert", was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL on January 15, 2012 at Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville IN for service there.

SOARE, Florin, was ordained into the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence Archbishop NATHANIEL on January 6, 2012 at St. John the Baptizer Church, Glendale AZ for service to Exaltation of the Holy Cross Mission, Phoenix AZ.

(STOIAN), Rev. Hierodeacon Iustin, was ordained into the Holy Priesthood by His Grace Bishop IRINEU on October 30, 2011 at St. Dimitrie Church, Easton CT for service to the monastic community of Ascension of the Lord Monastery, Clinton MI.

ASSIGNMENTS / RELEASES

ALEXE, Rev. Fr. Gabriel, was assigned Parish Priest of Protection of the Mother of God Mission, Pierrefonds QC, effective October 22, 2011.

ARDELEAN, Rev. Fr. Emil, at his own request, was released from his duties as Parish Priest of Sts. Michael & Gabriel Church, Sacramento CA, effective February 1, 2012, and is awaiting assignment.

CAPSA, Rev. Fr. Iustin, who was attached to Holy Trinity Church, Los Angeles, CA, at his own request, was released to Metropolitan JONAH on February 6, 2012, for release to the Church of Romania.

FLOREAN, Rev. Fr. Daniel I., was assigned Parish Priest of St. Basil the Great Mission, Durham NC, effective August 1, 2011.

FRISBY, Rev. Fr. Thomas "Robert", was assigned Parish Priest of Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville IN, effective January 15, 2012.

(FURDUI), Rev. Hierodeacon Neonil, was released for a period of six months from service to the monastic community of Ascension of the Lord Monastery, Clinton MI, effective February 1, 2012, to create a skete in the Pacific Deanery.

LUTAS, Rev. Fr. Gheorghe C., was released from his duties as Parish Priest of St. John the Hozevite Mission, Denver CO, effective August 11, 2011, and is awaiting reassignment.

PROTEASA, Rev. Fr. Ion, was released from his duties as Assistant Priest of St. Dumitru Church, New York, NY, and was assigned Parish Priest of St. John of Wallachia Mission, Alpine NJ, effective July 9, 2011.

(RODILA), Rev. Hieromonk Dionisie, was released for a period of six months from service to the monastic community of Ascension of the Lord Monastery, Clinton MI, effective February 1, 2012, to create a skete in the Pacific Deanery.

VLAD, Rev. Fr. Stefan, who was attached to Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Warren MI, was assigned Parish Priest of St. Theodora of Sihla Mission, Utica MI, effective July 9, 2011.

LAICIZED

ANTON, Rev. Fr. Virgil, who was attached to Holy Trinity Church, Los Angeles CA, was at his own request, reduced to the lay state, released from all priestly functions and responsibilities and removed from the ranks of clergy of the Orthodox Church in America and the Romanian Episcopate by the Holy Synod of Bishops, effective February 1, 2012.

MONASTERY RELOCATION

Ascension of the Lord Monastery, which had been located in Detroit MI, has relocated to Clinton MI, effective October 17, 2011.

Families ... *Cont. from page 14*

up knowing this is what we do, how we pray, how we fast, and how we give. They will learn this is how we work out our salvation. So in contrast to what we often see on television, we create an Orthodox Christian family, working out our salvation together by seeking the Kingdom of God. We seek the Kingdom of God by loving the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with all our mind; and, we love our neighbor - our family and others - as ourselves.

Fr. Hadzellis is an associate priest at the Annunciation Cathedral in Houston, and is the OCF regional chaplain in the South. He graduated from Holy Cross School of Theology in 2007 where he received a Master's of Divinity and a 2002 graduate of Oklahoma City University School of Law where he received a Juris Doctor.

Source: Orthodox Observer, January 2012, p. 27.



KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE PLOW AND YOUR EYES ON THE LORD!

An important component of the monthly bulletin is the pastoral message. In July, the parish heard from our Archbishop NATHANIEL and last month from our temporary pastor, Fr. Bill Clark. A few weeks ago, Father Bill returned back home to Prescott, AZ and a request for a pastoral message suggestion for the September bulletin was emailed to the office of the Archbishop. The response was simply, "Keep your hand on the plow and your eyes on the Lord!"

This was the first time I had heard of this expression. I began to research this saying and found it to come from Holy Scripture. After digging further into the subject, I discovered a glorious connection between plowing and this quote from Scripture which I will share with you.

What is a plow? The answer is simple. A plow is a tool — a tool used to prepare the soil for planting seed. Its function is to turn the upper layer of soil, bringing up the fresh nutrients, burying the nasty weeds, and preparing a furrow to receive the seed.

How do you plow a field? Plows cannot move without power: oxen, mules, horses, engines. In the spring, when the weather gets warmer, we see the farmers with their big fancy machinery in the field. This is quite in contrast to the Amish farmers that we also see in Indiana. They still use old-fashioned "horse power".

Plowing with a horse or teams of horses requires strength, concentration, and perseverance. Making that first furrow is the toughest. The farmer must keep his eye fixed on an object in front of him that does not change position in order to keep the furrow straight. After the first furrow is established, the focus is on the previous furrow, and so on.

But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). This quote from Scripture comes at the very end of chapter 9 after Jesus gave the Apostles the power and authority to perform exorcisms and healings as well as to preach the dawn of the Kingdom [preaching the Good News — their first mission]. When they returned, they shared all that they had done with Jesus and each other. The chapter continues with their journey following Jesus. As they walked together with Him, they listened to Him speak and witnessed many amazing things. There were also times when they doubted. Can you imagine any doubt after witnessing preaching, healing, and performing miracles? Every time there was doubt, they became powerless.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, we read that as they were going along the road, someone approached Jesus and said to Him: "I will follow you any place you go," to which Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes to live in, and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no

place to rest his head." What did this mean? Following Jesus would not be easy. If people accept Jesus, they will also accept His followers, and if they persecute Jesus, they will also persecute His followers.

As we read further, Jesus singled out a man and said to him, "*Follow me!*" But this man responded, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father," to which Jesus said, "*Let the people who are dead bury their own dead. You must go and tell about the kingdom of God.*" What was Jesus insinuating? This man needed to get his priorities straight. If burying the dead was this man's first concern, then he was already spiritually dead and he need not bother.

Another man approached Jesus and declared, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me go and say good-bye to my family," to which Jesus answered, "***No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.***"

Many times, the things of this life lay hold of us. They get in the way of our commitment to move forward in Christ. Do we really love Him? Do we really trust Him? If we do, then we don't look back, but look forward and take the chance even when it doesn't make any sense to us at all, because we know that He will be there to help us and save us.

What does plowing teach us about a life in Jesus? Jesus uses agriculture to illustrate what it takes to be a disciple and the importance of focus, perseverance, and faithfulness.

We [Faithful Believers] are the church's farmers whose ultimate goal is a great and fruitful harvest [the Kingdom and God's Blessings]. The tool that we have to use to achieve our goal is the plow [The Church, Holy Tradition, and Prayer]. The plow stirs up the Holy Spirit who nourishes and who buries the nasty weeds of this life. The horse power to move the plow is the grace of God, His energy. Jesus is our anchor. When we set our sights on Him, He will keep our furrows straight. The seeds that we plant in our hearts and the world are the Holy Scriptures.

Keeping our hand on the plow and our focus on Christ is not going to be an easy task for anyone. Living a God-centered life, attending services, reading the Scriptures, praying regularly will bring about some blisters, produce sweat, and stir up some dust as we break the ground of changing our way of living. We **will** break the blade of the plow on challenges that come our way, but in the process, we'll learn the discipline of keeping our eyes focused on Jesus; and, we will learn to love and trust Him to help us be "good and faithful servants".

Cornelia Merchant

From the Bulletin of Descent of the Holy Spirit Church, Merrillville, Indiana

SCHOOL OF BYZANTINE MUSIC PUBLISHES GUIDE

by Archdeacon Panteleimon



Byzantine Music School members present the first copy of their guide to Archbishop Demetrios - Photo: IMITRIS PANAGOS.

The Greek Archdiocesan School of Byzantine Music (ASBM) has recently published *Byzantine Music: Theory and Practice Guide* to assist novice-level Byzantine music students and to enrich liturgical music programs in local parishes. Prior to the guide's publication, the only sufficient Byzantine music textbooks were available in Greek.

After the first year of the school's operation, officials re-evaluated the teaching methods and the resources offered to ASBM students. They concluded that a theory book in English was needed and formed a committee to produce a student-friendly beginner's level textbook. An audio CD also was created to help students learn the eight modes, along with the various musical exercises in the book. Special attention was given to the guide's layout and graphic design to make it visually appealing. The book's scope, which initially focused on serving ASBM students, has expanded beyond the school.

St. Nicholas Church in Flushing, N.Y., incorporated the guide into its parochial school curriculum for grades 4-8 (more than 300 students), and Holy Cross School of Theology uses it to train future priests. Many local schools in each Metropolis also train future church musicians with the book. The Archdiocesan School of Byzantine Music ministry has more than 40 students enrolled, both men and women, ranging in age from 7 to over 50 years old. Its Archdiocesan Byzantine Choir, comprised of 25 young Greek-American trained Byzantine chanters, has produced albums and recently performed at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Since the creation of ASBM in October 2010, and the publication of the *Byzantine Music: Theory and Practice Guide*, Orthodox liturgical chant has inspired many to sing a forgotten song that has nurtured the minds and souls of Orthodox faithful for over a millennium. With this book, along with efforts of the Archdiocesan Byzantine Choir, a new horizon of the

beautifully refined and ageless expression of Byzantine music is in view and is already reaching the ears and hearts of many. For more information and to order the *Byzantine Music: Theory and Practice Guide*, visit www.asbm.goarch.org or call (212) 570-3590.

Source: *Orthodox Observer*, January 2012, p. 3.

Scholarships ... *Cont. from page 9*

period of time, the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America in Canada. The time to be served is at the discretion of the ruling hierarchy. The number of scholarships awarded to qualified students is determined by the committee. The scholarship is given directly to the School of Theology at the beginning of the recipient's second year of continued theological studies. **To be considered for the Autumn-Winter Term, a fully completed application (see requirements below) must be postmarked on or before May 31, 2012.** Applications received after this deadline will not be accepted by the Scholarship Committee. **RULES:** **A.** The Pamfil and Maria Bujea Family Seminarian Scholarship shall be awarded annually, provided there is at least one applicant who meets all the stated requirements. **B.** The Pamfil and Maria Family Scholarship will be awarded for studies only in these designated Schools of Theology: St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, 575 Scarsdale Road, Crestwood, N.Y. 10707; Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, 50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, MA 02445; St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary, PO Box 130, South Canaan, PA 18459-0130. **C.** Each scholarship awarded shall be valued at US \$10,000.00 (Ten Thousand United States Currency). **D.** Anyone who meets all the designated requirements may receive the scholarship only once. **REQUIREMENTS: Applicants may obtain requirements from <http://www.roea.org/bujea.html> or by writing to: The Pamfil and Maria Bujea Family Orthodox Christian Seminarian Scholarship Committee, PO BOX 309, GRASS LAKE, MI 49240-0309 U.S.A.**



CUVÂNT DE SUFLET

IANUARIE – FEBRUARIE 2012

În fața viitorului și în fața Mântuitorului.

Iubiți Frați Preoți și Iubiți Credincioși.

Suntem la început de An Nou, vă rog să primiți cele mai bune urări de sănătate și mântuire, Dumnezeu să ne ajute la toți, să fie un an mai bun cu împliniri și bucurii duhovnicești pentru fiecare din noi. Ne punem mereu întrebarea și trebuie să ne preocupe acest lucru: Cum stăm noi în fața viitorului? Cum ne putem pregăti viitorul? Cred că e o temă care merge pentru tineri în special, pentru că ei au în față viitorul. Spre deosebire de bătrâni, care au în spate trecutul. Evident că oamenii în lumea aceasta vin cu fața spre viitor. Omul este o ființă care privește în sus. Spre deosebire de animale, care privesc în jos. Ceea ce îl caracterizează pe om este faptul că are în vedere alceva decât pământul sau nu numai pământul. Deci omul este ființa care privește în sus, poate să privească și în jos, dar poziția lui este de privitor în sus. Poate că s-ar potrivi foarte bine ca definiție a omului și privitor spre viitor. Deci omul este ființa care privește în sus, omul este ființa care privește spre viitor - privitor spre viitor. Tot timpul căutăm să ne formăm un viitor, ne gândim la viitor, ne pregătim pentru viitor. Important este de știut cum anume ne putem pregăti viitorul, cum trebuie să gândim viitorul, ce trebuie să facem ca să avem un viitor așa cum îl dorim. Toate lucrurile acestea le reprezintă în primul rând Evanghelia și apoi, învățătura Bisericii noastre, rânduielile de slujbă ale Bisericii noastre, apoi, din punct de vedere religios moral, din punctul de vedere al cunoștinței, bineînțeles că ne pregătește școala. Pentru că cei mai mulți dintre oameni au în vedere viitorul aici pe pământ. Noi venim în lumea aceasta, dar nimenea nu știe de ce a venit în lumea aceasta. S-au făcut atâtea afirmații, se pot face afirmații diferite, dar pe viață nu-i scris nimic. Așa că am putea zice pur și simplu: trăim pentru că ne-am pomenit trăind și nu știm cum este sau cum ar fi dacă n-am trăi. Fiecare dintre noi care a venit în lumea aceasta a venit din neființă la ființă, din neexistență la existență. Cel care crede în Dumnezeu, care ține seama de Dumnezeu, care a fost educat în cunoștința de Dumnezeu, știe și aude la sfintele slujbe că a fost adus din neființă la ființă de Dumnezeu. *“Cela ce cu mâna dintru neființă m-ai zidit și cu chipul Tău cel dumnezeiesc m-ai cîstit, iar pentru călcarea poruncii iarăși m-ai întors în pământ, din care am fost luat, la cel după asemănare mă ridică, cu frumusețea cea dintâi iarăși împodobindu-mă”*, spunem noi vorbind cu Dumnezeu: *“Cela Ce cu mâna Ta dintru neființă m-ai zidit”*. N-am fost, și sunt, sunt, pentru că din ceea ce n-am fost, m-ai adus tu Doamne să fiu, mi-ai dat ființă, mi-ai dat existență. Nu numai existență mi-ai dat: mi-ai dat și chipul Tău cel dumnezeiesc. Această alcătuire ne pune deodată

în fața trecutului, a prezentului și a viitorului. Prezentul este de fapt timpul nostru real, timpul în care ne pregătim pentru viitor, timpul în care ne-am trăit cele dinaintea prezentului de față, timpul în care, ca prezent, ne-am alcătuit trecutul. *“Cela Ce cu mâna Ta dintru neființă m-ai zidit...”*, exist, pentru că m-ai creat Tu, Doamne, și mi-ai dăruit chipul Tău, m-ai cîstit pe mine, care exist cu chipul Tău cel dumnezeiesc”.

Iubiți Frați și Surori,

Bineînțeles, mărturisind că nu suntem ceea ce am fost destinați să fim și că în fața viitorului stând ar trebui să fim preocupați de revenirea la chipul cel dintâi, la chipul mării celei negrăite a lui Dumnezeu, dar aceasta nu se poate realiza decât dacă ajungem să fim curați, dacă devenim curați: *“Miluiește zidirea Ta, Stăpâne, și o curățește cu îndurarea Ta și moștenirea cea dorită dăruiește-mi, făcându-mă pe mine iarăși cetățean al raiului!”*. E o privire mai departe decât spre viitor, e o privire spre veșnicie.

Cu așa ceva pornim la drum în fața viitorului, cu conștiința că suntem creați de Dumnezeu și că din situația în care ne găsim, preocuparea noastră ar trebui să fie îmbunătățirea sufletească realizată prin înlăturarea a ceea ce este negativ în viața noastră și prin realizarea a ceea ce poate fi pozitiv în fața viitorului și în veșnicie.

Am zis că timpul nostru real, timpul în care acționăm, timpul în care ne formăm, timpul în care ne realizăm, este timpul prezent. Niciodată și nici un om nu se poate detașa din prezent ca să trăiască în viitor sau să trăiască în trecut. Trecutul noi l-am realizat prin prezentul de altădată, iar la prezent am ajuns prin prezentul de odinioară care pentru noi acum este trecutul nostru și în fiecare clipă din viața noastră suntem rezumatul întregii noastre vieți, iar la bătrânețe suntem ultima formă a rezumatului întregii noastre vieți.

Pentru că suntem la început de an și ne facem gânduri de viitor, e bine să le avem în vedere pentru viața noastră, dar mai ales pentru cei tineri, pentru viața voastră de tineri și să le-aveți ca jaloane pentru toată existența voastră. În fața viitorului stăm cu toate acumulările noastre. Deci, nu numai cu ceea ce suntem prin existența noastră conturată de Dumnezeu din materialul pe care l-a folosit Dumnezeu pentru existența noastră. Nici nu vorbim de materialul pe care l-a folosit Dumnezeu pentru că, gândiți-vă, începutul omului sunt niște celule care nu se văd cu ochiul liber. De aceea se poate zice că și omul e creat din nimic, cum a creat Dumnezeu lumea, deși nimicul acela nu-i chiar nimic, pentru că e totuși un punct de plecare. Gândiți-vă că în celulele acelea din care porneste omul vorbim că e cuprins tot omul cu tot ce are el. E

Cont. la pag. 22

ÎNTREBĂRI ȘI RĂSPUNSURI

ÎNTREBARE:

Nu cumva este o contradicție între afirmația Bisericii că toate păcatele pot fi iertate și afirmația Mântuitorului: *“Oricine va zice cuvânt împotriva Fiului Omului, se va ierta lui, dar oricine va zice împotriva Duhului Sfânt, nu se va ierta lui nici în veacul de acum, nici în cel ce va să vie.”* (Matei XII,32)

C.R., Aurora, Ontario

RĂSPUNS:

Principalele apelative cu care ne adresăm Sfântului Duh sunt: “mângâitorule”, “duhul adevărului” și “dătătorule de viață”. Ca “dătător de viață” el este duh al adevărului”, iar cele trei lucrări, sau virtuți religioase (credința, nădejdea și dragostea) ne sunt dăruite nouă de Sfântul Duh. Prin Sfântul Duh intrăm în comuniunea treimică și el fiind “vistier al bunătăților” ne dăruiește credința în Dumnezeu, nădejdea și dragostea. Fără acestea trei omul este mort. În acest sens negarea celor trei virtuți care ne leagă de Dumnezeu este ruptă. Ruperea noastră de Dumnezeu este moartea, în vreme ce iertarea căpătată prin pocăință ne leagă din Duhul Sfânt de sursa vieții care este Dumnezeu. În momentul în care omul, în mod rațional și

conștient, se lasă infectat de demonism și cu îndărătnicie luptă împotriva “duhului adevărului”, negând lucrările lui, în momentul acela refuzul omului este respectat de Dumnezeu, care l-a creat pe om ca ființă cu voință liberă. Dumnezeu nu trece peste voia liberă a omului, nu îl mântuiește cu forța, dragostea fiind un act liber de alegere, dăruire totală și împreună viațuire.

Păcatele împotriva Sfântului Duh sunt păcatele împotriva credinței, a nădejdei și a dragostei, nu pentru că aceste păcate ar depăși puterea de milostivire a lui Dumnezeu, ci pentru că omul întoarce spatele lui Dumnezeu, iar cum zice cu înțelepciune vorba românilor că “dragostea nu se face cu silă”. Dacă omul s-ar întoarce din refuzul lui la Dumnezeu ar fi iertat, pentru că omul nu poate să păcătuiască atât de mult încât să depășească abisul dragostei divine.

1. Păcatele împotriva credinței sunt:

Împotrivirea față de adevărurile credinței, refuzul de a crede în Dumnezeu, negarea, revolta și batjocorirea lui Dumnezeu.

2. Păcate împotriva nădejzii sunt:

a. Este păcat împotriva Duhului Sfânt încrederea nesocotită că Dumnezeu fiind bun iartă orice și atunci

Cont. la pag. 21

CUM SĂ VĂ DISTRUGEȚI, ÎN MOD PRACTIC, COPILUL

De mic nu-i refuzați nimic. Dați-i tot ce dorește, tot ce cere, mai cu seamă atunci când stăruie cu încăpățănare și plânge. Astfel va crește și va crede că ceilalți îi sunt datori mereu și întru toate, că are doar drepturi.

Când începe să înjure și să spună nerozii, dumneavoastră să râdeți. Astfel îi veți da de înțeles că este foarte deștept.

Nu-i spuneți niciodată: “Asta-i rău!”. Așa spun cei de modă veche, cu mentalități depășite și îngustime de minte. Când, mai târziu, va întâmpina greutăți în viață și va suferi, atunci va fi convins cu desăvârșire că societatea este cea care îl nedreptățește.

Strângeți dumneavoastră în urma lui tot ce lasă aruncat ici și colo: cărți, haine, încălțăminte... Nu care cumva să-i spuneți vreodată: “Strânge-ți lucrurile, pune-le la locul lor!”. Astfel va avea certitudinea că mama este sclava lui, și că pentru toate sunt întotdeauna ceilalți răspunzători.

Lăsați-l să vadă orice (mai ales la televizor), să citească orice, fără ca să-l îndrumați niciodată. Copilul dumneavoastră este supradotat și știe să discearnă! În acest chip instruirea și educația lui va avea o gamă mai largă și mai variată!

Nu-i dați vreo povățuire duhovnicească. În fața lui, luați în zeflema și batjocură credința, Biserica, preoții și pe cei ce-i urmează. Când copilul crește, “va alege singur”.

Dați-i bani de buzunar cu nemiluita, ca să nu se simtă inferior celorlalți și “să fie în lipsă, așa cum ați fost dumneavoastră cândva”. Când va crește, va fi convins că valoarea omului i-o dă banul, indiferent cum a fost obținut.

Nu-i spuneți niciodată: “Fă asta!” sau “Nu face cealaltă!”, căci așa îl constrângeți, nu-i respectați libertatea și personalitatea. Ba chiar se poate să-i cauzați și... traume sufletești! Când va crește, va crede că viața înseamnă doar să poruncești, niciodată să ascuți!

Certați-vă, vorbiți-vă urât unul altuia în fața lui, fără pic de rușine. Nu vă neliniștiți, astfel nu-i veți provoca... traume sufletești! Mai târziu, când se va căsători, îi va părea firesc să facă la fel.

Când începe să se încurce în mrejele plăcerilor trupești, dumneavoastră închideți ochii. Nu-i spuneți nimic. Nu-l povățuiți. Nu-l săcăiți cu sfaturile dumneavoastră. Lăsați-l să se tăvălească în mocirla curviei, de vreme ce “asta-i ceva normal”.

Cont. la pag. 21

SFINȚIREA BISERICII ADORMIREA MAICII DOMNULUI DIN ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA



Sâmbătă 11 noiembrie 2011 a avut loc sfințirea Bisericii "Adormirea Maicii Domnului" din Anaheim, California, păstorită cu multă vrednicie de Prea Cucernicul Părinte Cornel Avramescu.

Sfințirea a început cu slujba Vecerniei de vineri seara, în cadrul căreia Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel a adus în biserică răclița cu Sfintele Moaște ce urmau a fi puse în masa Sfântului Altar.

Sâmbătă dimineața în sunetul clopotelor, a început slujba propriu-zisă de sfințire a bisericii, cu procesiunea în jurul bisericii, sfințirea sfintei mese și a întregii biserici, urmată apoi de Sfânta Liturghie Arhierască, săvârșită în pridvorul bisericii. Astfel slujba de sfințire a încununat munca de peste 25 de ani a acestei comunități sub păstoria Părintelui Cornel Avramescu, fiind rodul efortului îndelungat depus de Părintele, familia sa și credincioșii parohiei.

A urmat apoi un frumos banchet festiv la care au participat aproximativ 450 de persoane. Atmosfera a fost întreținută de un trio al Filarmonicii din Los Angeles. A cântat apoi și corul Parohiei sub îndrumarea dirijoarei Ema Kira și grupul de copii al școlii Duminicale sub conducerea directorului Florin Tudor. Mâncarea a fost pregătită în buna parte la restaurantul D-lui Dumitru Sabău. Totul a fost în grija d-nei preotese și a Reuniunii Doamnelor. La sfârșit s-au rostit scurte alocuțiuni, iar Părintele Cornel a primit din partea Înalt Prea Sfințitului Nicolae o icoană a Maicii Domnului, iar din partea Sfântului Sinod, Înalt Prea Sfințitul Nathaniel a înmănat o gramată semnată de toți ierarhii, prin care a fost ridicat la rangul de Protopresbiter Părintele Cornel Avramescu pentru cei 40 de ani de preoție, dintre care 26 de ani în OCA.

La slujba de sfințire au participat arhieriei: Înalt

Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel al Episcopiei noastre, Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nicolae al Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române din cele 2 Americi (Patriarhia Română), Prea Sfințitul Episcop Benjamin al San Francisco și al Episcopiei de Vest a OCA, Prea Sfințitul Episcop Petroniu al Sălajului (Patriarhia Română) și Prea Sfințitul Episcop Vicar Irineu al Episcopiei noastre.

Dintre clericii participant amintim: Pr. Constantin Alece din Los Angeles, Pr. Catalin Mitescu din Pomona, Pr. Ionel Cudrutescu din Toronto, Canada, Pr. Constantin Lapustea din San Jose, California, Diacon Florin Lapustea din San Jose, Diacon Nicolae Lapustea din San Jose, Arhimandrit Nicodim Bibarț din Upland, California, Pr. Mihai Cărpenițan din Torrance, California, Pr. Anton Frunza din Grand Rapids, Michigan, Pr. Vasile Muntean din Portland, Oregon, Pr. Patrick O'Grady din Pomona, Pr. Emil





Ardelean din Sacramento, California, Diacon Mihaita
Monca din Sacramento, Pr. Rares Onofrei din
omona, Pr. Alin Munteanu din Phoenix, Arizona, Pr.
Marcis Stoica din Boston, Massachusetts, Pr. Iustin
Apșa din Los Angeles, Ierodiacon Sebastian
Dumitrașcu de la Vatra Românească, Pr Alb din
România, Pr. Sabindin Apahida, România, Pr Vasile
Sandui din Salard, România și Pr. Gheorghe Naghi
in San Jose. Din partea altor Biserici au asistat: Pr.

Alfred Baca Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenical Affairs
Catholic Diocese of Orange, Pr. George Vida Pastor
of Annunciation, Byzantine Church, Anaheim, Pr.
Archim. James Babcock pastor of Holy Cross Melkite
Greek Catholic Church, Placencia, Pr. Hyrant Yeretizian,
pastor of Forty Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church,
Santa Ana și Pr. Vincente Gilmor de la Catholic
Norbertine Monastery.

Participant

ntrebări și Răspunsuri

Cont. de la pag. 19

mul sfidează bunătatea Lui păcătuind cu intenție și
ună știință. De asemenea, este păcat să crezi că te
nântuiești numai prin credință, ducând o viață păcătoasă
prin refuzul de a face fapte bune. E o asemănare în
demonism cu cea a diavolului care crede în Dumnezeu,
dar nu face voia Lui.

b. Deznădejdea. Unii oameni își pierd speranța că
Dumnezeu îi mai poate ierta și din această cauză
renunță la pocăință și păcătuiesc cu bună știință,
ăsându-se astfel în mâinile diavolului. Așa a procedat
Iuda, care din deznădejde și mândrie s-a sinucis.

3. Păcate împotriva dragostei sunt:

a. Invidia și răutatea manifestate către aproapele
care urmează calea Domnului prin virtuți și fapte
bune, precum și sfătuirea altuia să păcătuiască, iar
celui greșit nearătându-i calea cea bună din plăcerea
de a-l vedea decăzut din harul divin.

b. Îndârjirea în răutate, nepocăința până la moarte
și ignorarea darurilor lui Dumnezeu.

Păcatele împotriva Sfântului Duh pot fi iertate ca
prime fel de păcate, dar gravitatea lor rezultă din faptul
că omul refuză ajutorul lui Dumnezeu. Dumnezeu
care l-a creat pe om liber nu se poate contrazice forțând
libertatea omului, făcând din acesta o sculă pioasă
care în mod mecanic, iar nu din libertate și iubire, ar
ubi pe aproapele lui și pe Dumnezeu. Pe scurt, Duhul

Sfânt fiind iubirea Tatălui care porcede spre Fiul, iar
prin acest act ne ÎNFIAZĂ treimic, revolta noastră
conștientă împotriva IUBIRII automat este împotriva
SFÂNTULUI DUH, adică rupere din milostivirea
dumnezeiască și demonică sfidare a bunătății și
dragostei divine.

Pr. Dr. DUMITRU ICHIM

Cum să vă Distrugeți ...

Cont. de la pag. 19

Să-i țineți întotdeauna partea în fața profesorilor și
vecinilor. Să nu credeți niciodată că "îngerușul"
dumneavoastră poate să facă lucruri de rușine și
probleme. Ocărâți-i pe aceia ce prietenește și bine
intenționați vă aduc la cunoștință ceva în legătură cu
asta. Sunt... clevetitori și invidioși!

Când veți ajunge la secția de Poliție, unde l-au dus
pentru că a furat sau a luat droguri, strigați tare de față
cu toți că este un nemernic și o lichea, un golan; că v-
ați jertfit pentru binele lui, dar n-ați reușit niciodată să
îl cumințiți. Astfel veți ieși cu obrazul curat.

Pregătiți-vă pentru o viață plină de suferință și
remușcări. O veți avea...

Episcopul Irineu, "Mamă, ai grijă!"
(traducere de monahul Gherontie Nica,
din periodicul "Fluierul păstoresc ortodox",
editat de Mitropolia de Avlomos și Viotia)

FRĂȚIA ORTODOXĂ SUA:

GÂNDEȘTE-TE CU CE CONTRIBUI TU ÎN 2012

Prin Frăția Ortodoxă, Episcopia noastră continuă să își realizeze scopurile ca și până acum, Româno-Americanii contribuind la ortodoxia Americii de Nord, într-o măsură mai mare decât îți închipui.

Începând cu data de 26 Ianuarie, puteți vizita organizația Laicilor Creștini Ortodocși (OCL) din America pe www.ocl.org și să vedeți cum arhivele de la Vatra au ajutat nu numai să se păstreze, ci să se restaureze o istorie ortodoxă ce putea să fie pierdută. La cea de a 24-a întâlnire anuală a OCL care a avut loc în luna octombrie 2011 în Pittsburgh, PA, s-au comemorat Festivalele Ortodoxe din 1963 și 1977, festivale la care peste 10,000 de credincioși au umplut stadionul Mellon din Pittsburgh, festival care a fost televizat și transmis pe canalul TV național CBS. La aceste manifestări ortodoxe de excepție, au participat 12 episcopi, reprezentând fiecare grup ortodox, și peste 175 de preoți. Corul de 1,000 de voci, format din membrii AROY plus alte 6 grupuri de tineret ai "CEOYLA" (consiliul liderilor tineri ai ortodoxiei răsăritene din America) au cântat la aceste evenimente. O manifestare ortodoxă de o asemenea anvergură nu s-a mai văzut până-n zilele noastre în America.

O contribuție majoră a campaniei naționale CEOYLA a fost ca în 32 de state ale Americii să fie recunoscută ortodoxia ca una din cele 4 credințe majore; o alta contribuție a fost ca orfanii de religie ortodoxă să fie dați spre adopție unor familii ortodoxe. Mai mult, în anii '50, CEOYLA a ajutat la organizarea asociațiilor ortodoxe studențești în universitățile din America de Nord; de asemenea, a contribuit la formarea Consiliului Episcopilor Ortodocși din America – SCOBA – în 1960.

Cea de-a 24-a întâlnire anuală a OCL (se poate vedea pe link-ul de mai sus) s-a deschis cu mesajul de bun venit al Prea Sfințitului Episcop Basil al Wichita, în cadrul căruia, Prea Sfințitul menționează participarea proprie la grandiosul festival din 1963, ca făcând parte din tineretul de atunci.

D-l Ron Mureșan, vice-președinte al Frăției Ortodoxe, a ținut un discurs tematic folosind materiale de arhivă (fotografii, benzi înregistrate etc.), adaptate cu ajutorul tehnologiei moderne (PowerPoint, CD, DVD), cu binecuvântarea IPS Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, patronul OCL-ului. Arhiepiscopul Nathaniel s-a adresat celor prezenți, printre care s-au aflat părintele ieromonah Patrick Carpenter, preot în Pittsburgh, maica stareță Cristophora de la Mănăstirea Schimbarea la Față, Marie Avramuș, casiera Frăției. Casetele cu înregistrările festivalelor din 1963 (audio) și 1977, în format U-Matic, devenite foarte fragile, au fost salvate de doi credincioși ai Mitropoliei Grecești din Detroit. La recenta întâlnire au fost prezenți d-l Michael Herzag

(OCA), directorul festivalului din 1977, și d-na Kweilin Nassar, din cadrul Arhiepiscopiei Antiohiene, care în 1977 s-a ocupat de regizarea și televizarea festivalului pe postul de televiziune KDKA-TV.

Anul 2012 este promițător pentru Frăție ca să realizeze un și mai mare progres. Fiți receptivi la publicația noastră de iarnă-primăvara: "Ce considerați că puteți oferi Bisericii voastre în 2012?" Puteți fi în contact cu Frăția Ortodoxă la adresa de e-mail: ronmuresan@att.net

Frăția continuă tradiția de a subvenționa taberele de vară pentru tineret de la Vatra, calendarele de buzunar, și mai mult, în 2011 am răspuns apelului Arhiepiscopului Nathaniel de a subvenționa rolul Episcopiei în Adunarea Episcopilor Ortodocși din America de Nord.

Un alt proiect în curs de desfășurare este publicarea (în ediție bilingvă) a colecției minunate "Livada cu îngeri și sfinți", scrisă de ceea care a fost preoteasa Florica Bațu Ichim. Sperăm ca povestirile, poeziile și iconografia cărții vor eleva spiritele celor ce o vor citi. Suntem încă în căutare de donatori deoarece intenționăm să edităm cartea atât în format electronic cât și în format clasic. Cartea reprezintă un îndemn adresat episcopilor, preoților și instructorilor de religie, dar și părinților, nașilor, bunicilor, pentru a fi folosită ca o comoară a vieții de familie și întărire a credinței în Dumnezeu.

De asemenea, ne-am luat angajamentul să lucrăm la comemorarea celor 100 de ani de la nașterea celui ce a fost Arhiepiscopul nostru Ț. Valerian Trifa (n. 1914); să cunoaștem și să apreciem viața și faptele unui mare Român-American, care ne-a dat tot ce a avut de dat, trecând cu vederea slăbiciunile noastre și știind să scoată la lumina tot ceea ce a fost mai bun din noi, păstoriții lui.

În încheiere, vă rugăm să fiți cu inimile deschise și atenți la acest anunț care ofera sugestii importante pentru viața noastră ortodoxă. Părinți, nași, bunici, și copii, haideți cu toții să ne unim într-un nou elan al Episcopiei noastre!

Doamne ajută!

Ron Mureșan

Cuvânt de Suflet ... *Cont. de la pag. 17*

o minune extraordinară să te gândești ce poate fi în lucrarea lui Dumnezeu, un început uman, care, de fapt, cuprinde și alte începuturi din alții pornite. Cu cât înainteză omul în viața duhovnicească, cu atât își dă seama mai mult de mărețiile lui Dumnezeu. Nu ne gândim la măreția lui Dumnezeu, în abstract, așa că e mare Dumnezeu, că a făcut Dumnezeu lumea aceasta.

Cont. la pag. 24

PILDA BOGATULUI CĂRUIA I-A RODIT ȚARINA

FRAGMENT DIN ROMANUL "MICUL BOTEZĂTOR")

— "Da' ce mai faci altfel, Mătușă Iliață?" Întrebă Micul Botezător după ce-i umplu căldarea cu apă în vreme ce bătrânica se odihnea lângă șipot.

— Apăi, dă, cum să zic. Cu vecinu'. Anul acesta i-au dat țarinile ca niciodată. Zi și noapte cară și de pe dealuri și de câmpuri toate bunătățile pământului. La mine păpușoiul - sfrijit, cu tăciune și vai de capul lui, la el tot cu două păpuși și mari cât cotul minicului. Am avut niște straturi cu ardei, pătlăgele și țepe verdețuri, săracile de ele, gălbenite de parcă ar fi mormat mahorcă toată ziua. La el să vezi roșiile - cât este bostănei, plesnind de sănătate printre frunze, ca să nu mai vorbesc de bostani - ca godăceii sugând câte cece la vrej. De vița de vie ce să mai spun? Strugur lângă strugur cu boaba cât țâța oii, cu proptea la fiecare; la mine - cât agurida de mici și piperniciți, dar la mă plâng, că mă bate Dumnezeu. Erau dulci de țipeau în gură, numai că au venit săcăturile alea de mănăcuțe și graurii sau ce-or fi și într-o după amiază i-au curățat toată bolta. De, sărăcuțele, tot la omul sărac trag că știu că are inima bună. Apoi să vezi perii și perii lui! Până la pământ, dom'le! Ionatanele străluceau ca podoabele bradului de Crăciun, iar perele se iarnă ca dovlegeii de mari de te mirai cum nu se rup omii chiar cu toate proptelele. La mine, ca niște albedurețe, dar bune și alea că n'au venit nici o albatăciune să mi le strice. Prunii lui - până la pământ lini de roadă. Prune negre, prune albastre, bardașe, prune galbene, rotunde, lunguiețe, pierje, ghioldane... Toată ziua dogarii ciocănesc la butoaie și putini să lână borhotul pentru țuică. Păi, anul acesta o să-i ărgă la velniță răchia ca apele tale Micule Botezător. Dar, hai să-ți spun una ce n'ai auzit de când umbli prin lumea asta. Alaltăieri a venit la poartă. "Sărut mâna, cocoane, da' ce pustiu de bine, te aduce pe la mine?" îi zic. "Să trăiești, Mătușă Iliață", îmi răspunde cărpinându-se la ceafă. "Necazuri, necazuri... Greu e să fii sărac, dar și mai greu să fii bogat. Vai, vai, niciodată nu s'a făcut recolta ca anul acesta. Și știi ce? Am grămadit cum am putut grânele în jitnițe și hambare și acum nu știu ce să fac cu strânsul câmpului că nu mai am unde să le pun. Strică un hambar, fă-l mai mare, podul grajdului e mic, coșarele trebuie dărmate și altele să fac, butoaiele nu-mi mai ajung, damigene nu mai găsesc. De dimineața până seară tot pe drumuri și la iarmaroace și la piață, caută lemnari, dogari, țierari, tinichigii și-i o gălăgie prin ogrăzile mele de parcă m'am apucat să construiesc corabia lui Noe. Vai și-amar, că nu mai știu ce să fac și cum să mă mai împart că dacă vine vreo viforniță îmi strică toate jucatele de pe câmp. Dar, să nu mă lungesc prea mult cu belele mele. Am venit să-ți cer iertare că slugile mele ți-au cam rărit gardul. Și asta pe furiș fără să

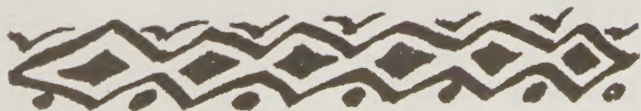
aibă obrazul să-ți ceară. Și asta nu e frumos. Am venit să fac ce n'au făcut nemernicii de ei, să te iau în seamă ca vecină și să-ți cer ceva, că așa e creștinește, să nu furi că-i mare păcat. Am văzut că ți-au mai rămas niște putregaiuri de gard. Dă-mi-le mie și pe acelea că o să te ajute Dumnezeu cândva să faci și matele un gard nou ca toată lumea. Îți fac un serviciu să-ți curăț putregaiurile alea de garduri cât au mai rămas. Sunt tocmai bune pentru afumat pastrama, fiertul țuicii, o minune, ce să zic, că ard mohnit exact cum trebuie. Ce crezi? Mă uit și la hardughia de lângă casă. Tot s'a hârtoit într-o parte și mă gândesc, dragă vecină, să nu cumva să se dărâme peste tine. O să-mi rămâi recunoscătoare că te ajut s'o dai jos fără să-ți cer nici un gologan. S'ar putea să-mi fac din ea un hambaraș cel puțin." Apoi întinse capul peste porțița de la drum. "Si te-aș mai ruga ceva, că așa se ajută vecinii între ei, nu? Văd că ai niște fasolică proaspătă pe haragi. Pot să trimit niște argați de-ai mei să culeagă de-o mănărică că pe a mea am urcat-o în pod de săptămâna trecută. Și ca să fie pomana deplină, nu te superi, poți să-i lași să culeagă vreo traistă de porumb. Al meu s'a uscat, dar al tău e în lapte, crud și proaspăt cum e mai bun de copt și de fiert. Poate și niște castraveciiori că-s mici ca degetul de prunc și niște roșioare, că alea mici îs gustoase. Ce zici? Nu-i bine când se ajută vecinii între ei?" M'am uitat la el și zău că n'am mai putut să-mi închid gura. Și numai ce-l văd că se mai mai scarpină o dată la ceafă: "Văd că ești femeie tare, tare de treabă. Dacă tot n'ai gard, lasă-mi și căruțele pe scurtătură să treacă peste ogorul tău de recoltă. Mi-ai face mult bine că n'ar mai trebui să mai ocolesc două ulițe și femeie bună cum ești cred că mă poți înțelege că nu am timp și că am uitat și care mi-i numele." În cele din urmă, Mătușă Ileana își ridică găleata și dă să plece când vede pe cărarea dinspre codru pe Moș Costache, clopotarul și groparul satului:

- "Da' ce cauți cuscre prin pădure. Ai pierdut ziua de ieri?" Îl întâmpină Mătușă Ileana glumind.

- "Că bine zici, ziua de ieri, cuscră. S'a dus cum nici n'ar fi fost. Caut lemn de castan să-i cioplesc sicriu cum au oamenii bogați. Au n'ai auzit că azi noapte vecin' tu s'a dus la strămoșii lui?

- I-auzi, bre ! Să n-aibă lemn nici pentru sicriu. Păcat că nu am în curte și un castan că i l'aș fi dat din inimă și pe acela, săracul de el!

Dumitru Ichim



BALADA COPILULUI CERȘETOR

Noaptea mă'nghite,
frigul m-apasă.
De mâna mea'ntinsă
nimănui nu îi pasă.

Oamenii,
prin față 'mi,
trec grăbiți
pe trotuar.
Să-i mai rog pentru'n ban
e de-acum
în zadar.

Nu m-aud. Nu mă văd.
Sunt doar unul
din mulții cerșind.
Cui îi pasă
de 'ngheț
flămând
în noroi
sau într-un colț de stradă,
bolind.

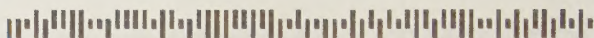
Vlăjgarii mă bat.
Bețivii mă'njură.
Doar câini jigăriți
îmi țin de căldură.
Polițiștii
mi-aruncă
vorbe ce dor.
Pe umeri'mi slabi
port povara
păcatelor lor.

Mă culc,
în târziu,
pe bulgări betegi.
Cu lacrimile mele
spăl căderile lumii întregi.

"Doamne, ai milă !"
Îngân și mă'nchin.
Îngerul mi-a șoptit de un loc
fără durere și chin.

În loc luminat,
în loc cu verdeață,
Măicuța mea sfântă
te văd ca prin ceață.
Sunt îngeri...
Iubire...

Iisus lăcrămând
îmi mângâie sufletul
setos și flămând.
Fruntea-I în spini



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spre mine-o apleacă,
lumina iubirii
în ea mă înneacă.

"Vino !" mă chemă.
Hristos, sângerând,
potiru'mi întinde
pe Tatăl rugând...

Florica B

Cuvânt de Suflet ... *Cont. de la*

Dar când te gândești cum a făcut Dumnezeu
aceasta, cum e lumea aceasta de complicată,
vă la un grăunte de polen, înveți la școală
structura lui. Ce înseamnă asta? Înseamnă că
e complicată, că nu-i doar fire de nisip, și chi
fir de nisip, un bob de nisip are o structură
punct de vedere fizic. Sunt niște lucruri extrao
suntem înconjurați de taine. Dacă nu trăim cu g
acestea în fața viitorului, nu putem avea un viitor care
să ne dea mai multă lumină.

Cu aceste gânduri să începem un an nou în viața
noastră, cu gândul la Dumnezeu și la mijloacele care
ne apropie de Dumnezeu, și trebuie să știm un lucru:
Dumnezeu nu se descoperă tehnicității, nu se descoperă
unei tehnici, Dumnezeu se descoperă inimii curate:
"Fericiți cei curați cu inima, că aceia vor vedea pe
Dumnezeu!". Ce mult uităm noi lucrul acesta! Vrem
sa-l găsim pe Dumnezeu în cărți, vrem să-l găsim pe
Dumnezeu în canoane duhovnicești, vrem să-l găsim
pe Dumnezeu undeva și când colo uităm că Dumnezeu
S-a descoperit celor cu inima curată. Că a zis Domnul
Hristos: "Fericiți sunt cei curați cu inima, că aceia
vor vedea pe Dumnezeu".

Vă doresc tuturor cititorilor să aveți parte de un an
binecuvântat, cu folos duhovnicesc, cu nădejde în
purtarea de grijă a lui Dumnezeu, prin mijlocirea și
rugăciunile Preacuratei Născătoare de Dumnezeu și
ale tuturor sfinților plăcuți lui Dumnezeu, să fim mai
buni, mai credincioși, mai drepiți, mai cinstiți, ca prin
tot ce facem să se preamărească numele lui Dumnezeu.
Iar Voia Lui să se facă pretutindenea pe pământ și-n
cer.

Așa să ne ajute Dumnezeu.
Cu părintești binecuvântări.

+ IRINEU, Episcop Vicar
SOLIA JAN/FEB 2012